

June 5, 1961

Dr. Harold C. Urey  
Department of Chemistry  
University of California  
La Jolla, California

Dear Harold:

Now seems to me to be a propitious time to push for a vigorous concrete program of deep space and planetary explorations. Our next best bet is 1964, and we have to push fairly hard and soon to keep the schedule from slipping to 1967!

In view of the imperfect reliability and payload limitations of our vehicles, the productivity of 1964 missions should be better assured and strengthened by organizing 'fleets' of several vehicles, not just single shots. Furthermore, these proposals should help to dramatize the scientific objectives and help to get them necessary political support.

Apart from what we might do ourselves, this program also gives us a tangible goal for international cooperation. Many proposals for competition with the USSR have been unrealistically ambitious. And I think I would dread the committee work that would be needed to effectuate a marriage of US experiments with USSR vehicles. But I would like to propose that 1964 be designated as an 'Interplanetary Year'. This would be a proposal of the NAS through COSPAR. It would urge the governments to place special emphasis on planetary and interplanetary missions during that year. It would ask for special emphasis on mutual discussions of plans (the optimum launch dates are too obvious for any secrecy) with a view to getting the most effective return, especially of interplanetary data. And the communications return of the vehicles should be coordinated for the best exploitation of the missions. This may be specially pertinent to the relay of data from planetary landers and orbiters. Altogether the plan would be consistent with the ideals of Kennedy's proposals.

UREY, H.

To prepare a strong position on this, I would suggest that a small group of the Space Science Board prepare a brief paper, perhaps amplifying (and connecting?) the enclosed suggestions for Board action on transmittal to NASA and PSAC. If we can react to this and communicate by phone and mail we may be able to forfend another meeting. If it can't be helped, I would be very pleased if we could get together here or at La Jolla.

There is some possibility of COSPAR-related sessions with USSR participation this August and it would be gratifying to be able to broach this suggestion at these occasions.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg  
Professor of Genetics

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cc: Dr. Berkner, Dr. Simpson, Dr. Rossi, Mr. Derbyshire